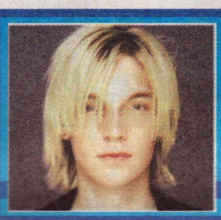
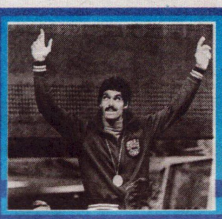
No 779 August 15, 2004



# THE FUNDAY TIMES



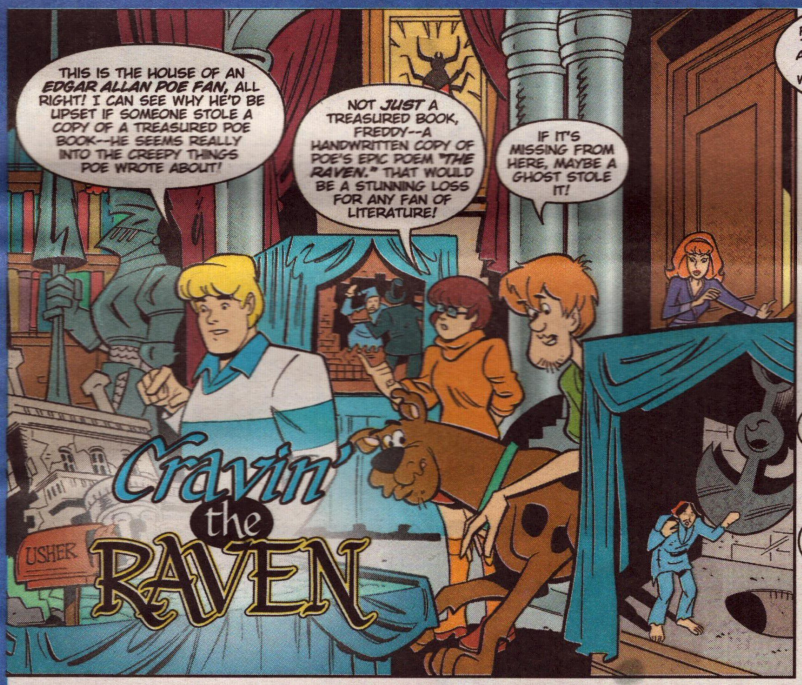
**Alex's band**
The Calling's Alex tells us how the band has managed to handle success
Page 5



**Medal masters**
Read about the golden Olympians who helped make the Games great
Page 6

**Just watch it!**
Want a DVD player and TV for your room? Then enter our competition!
Page 8

## SCOOBY-DOO! in CRAVIN' THE RAVEN



More inside

SCOOBY-DOO AND ALL RELATED CHARACTERS AND ELEMENTS ARE TRADEMARKS OF AND © HANNA-BARBERA. (S04)

# SAY CHEESE

We've had lots of your Summer Snaps already but we want more! So send us some pictures of you enjoying your holiday. The reader that sends the photo that we deem to be picture perfect wins a nifty Nikon Coolpix 2200 digital camera. Designed to make picture-taking fast and simple, the 2200 has 15 handy scene modes, a blur warning function and a large storage memory. Plus, four runners-up will each collect a Nikon AF250SV compact camera, which features an extra-large viewfinder and a wide-angle 28mm lens.

So send us photos of your holiday destinations, favourite activities, friends or family – or even a pic of yourself just lovin' the summer break!

Mark your entry SUMMER SNAPS and send it to Funday, 1 Pennington Street, London E98 1ST. Or e-mail your picture, making sure it's at least 300dpi, to funday.times@sunday-times.co.uk. Please include your name, age, address and home telephone number on the back of any photos. Sorry, but we can't return any pictures that are sent.

Nikon

## THE FUNDAY TIMES

**COMPETITIONS**

Send answers to all competitions to us at: The Funday Times, PO Box 5073, Leighton Buzzard LU95 1AY or funday.comps@sunday-times.co.uk [only one e-mail per entrant please]
**Competition deadline: August 25**
Entrants to Funday competitions must be 16 and under.

**F-MAIL**

Send your letters, cartoons, jokes and drawings to: The Funday Times, PO Box 5073, Leighton Buzzard LU7 7GX or funday.times@sunday-times.co.uk

**NOT RECEIVED YOUR PRIZE?**

Please telephone 020 7711 1521 or e-mail custserv@fundaytimes.co.uk

**GOT A NEWS STORY?**

Please telephone 020 7782 7415 or e-mail funday.news@sunday-times.co.uk

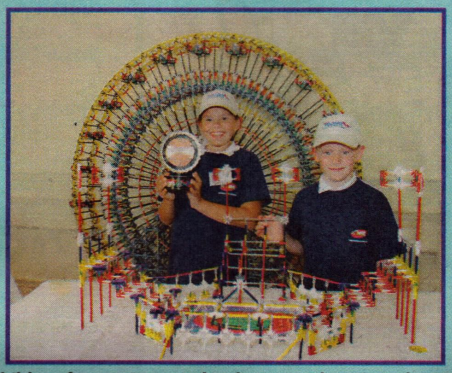
COVER PICTURE: KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES



Look out for your Summer Snaps in Funday soon!

# NEWS

## K'NEX STOP ... USA!

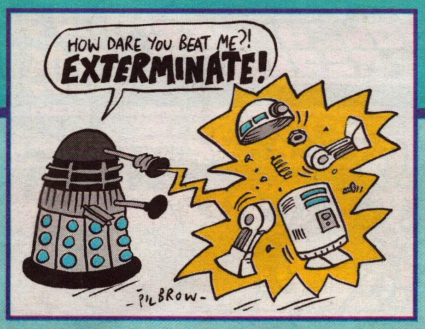


Builders in Athens have created some impressive structures for this year's Olympic Games but even they would find it tough to construct a stadium in an hour-and-a-half. That was the challenge facing the competitors in the final of the Junior Engineer for Britain K'nex Challenge last month. Working in pairs, the 32 children from primary schools across the UK and Ireland, were given their task and a box of K'Nex with which to make it. After a hectic 90 minutes, Megan Thomas and Simon Bentley [above] from Ysgol Deiniol Primary School, Wrexham, scooped first prize. "While all the teams were brilliant, the judges felt Megan and Simon best managed to incorporate imagination and ingenuity into their building skills," said Alicia Sachya from K'Nex. The talented 10-year-olds' prize includes a behind-the-scenes tour of the K'Nex HQ, near Philadelphia, in the US.

## FORMULA FUN

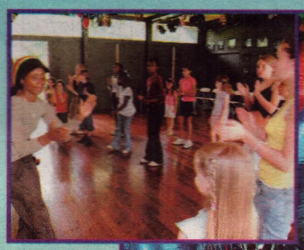
Some Formula One fans enjoy building models of their favourite race cars. But engineer Andrew Staniforth decided to think big – and make a life-size version of Michael Schumacher's Ferrari. It took a little longer than a lightning-fast pit stop to turn his dream into reality, though .. handy Andy spent 10 years on his incredible replica. With the help of his dad Derek, Andy built the body and chassis around a 1.7-litre Alfa Romeo engine. Now his neighbours in Wickwar, Gloucestershire, are used to seeing the fake Ferrari on the roads. And although the 210kph car doesn't quite match Schumacher's 360kph version, it thrashes it on price. A real F1 Ferrari is worth a cool £3m, but Andrew's copy cost just £12,000 to build.

## ROBOT WARS




They're highly intelligent, almost indestructible and come from another galaxy – but which is the greatest robot? More than 8,000 cinema goers were quizzed about their favourite robots from the big and small screens. It's no surprise that the top five contains two famous names from Star Wars. But while C-3PO claims a respectable fourth, his android pal R2-D2 came top of the list. Hopefully, the news won't cause too much jealousy and the bickering 'bot buddies can finish work on the next instalment of the series, Revenge of the Sith, due out next May.

## ACTING UP



The curtain goes up for this year's Kids Week on Friday – with lots of free London theatre tickets available for children. At the recent launch in Regent's Park, youngsters got an exciting preview as stars of Mamma Mia, Chicago and Stomp all gave exclusive dance workshops. "We're performing the routine Hands and Feet – with lots of clapping and stomping," Stomp dancer Manasseh Jackson told Funday. "It's very energetic!" For details and ticket availability, click on www.kidsweek.co.uk

## BACK FROM THE DEAD?

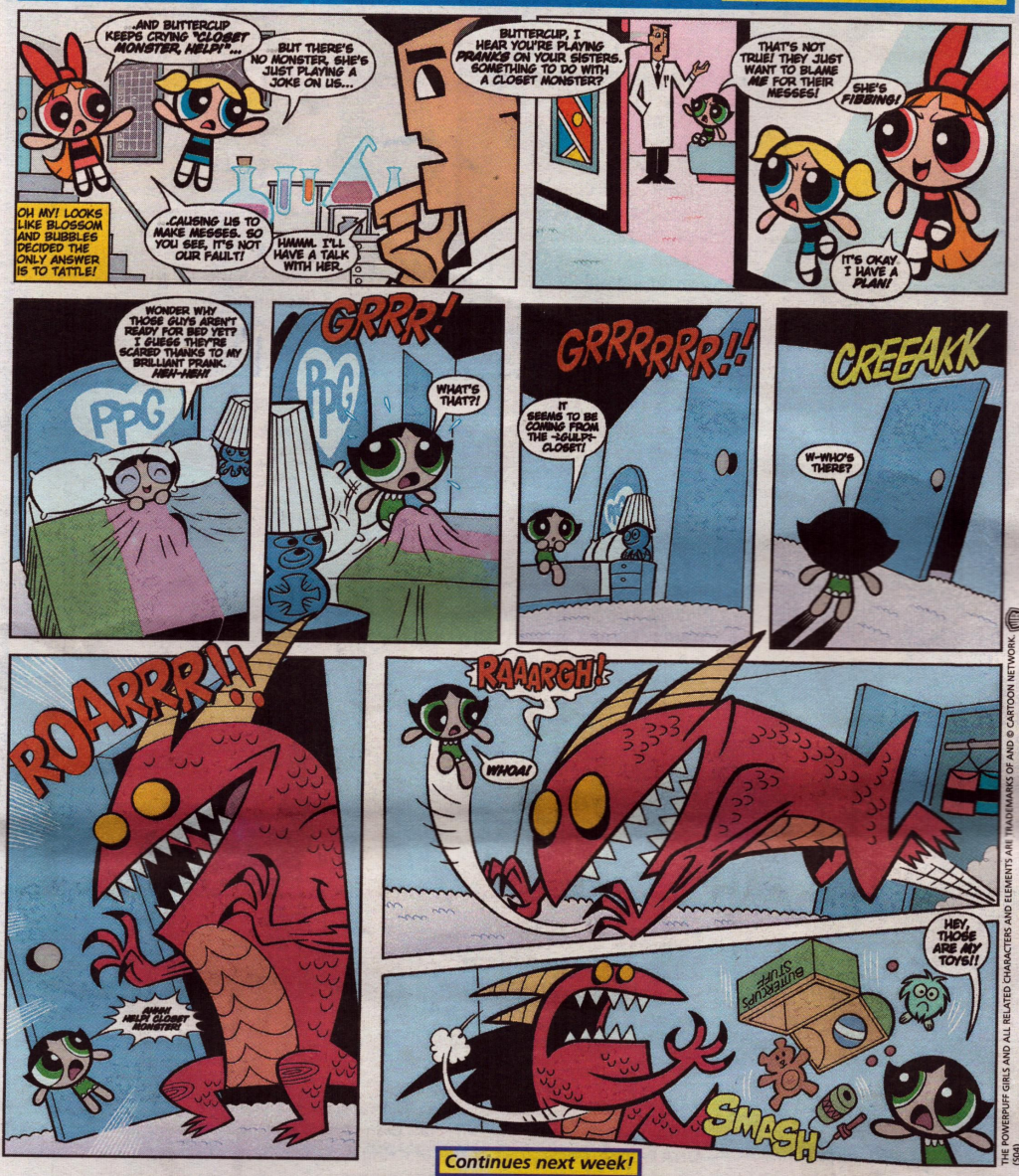
More than 12,000 species around the world are currently endangered and thousands are expected to become extinct within the next 30 years. But a new scheme means that it might not be the last we see of these rare animals. The Frozen Ark project, based at the Natural History Museum and London Zoo, plans to collect DNA from every species at risk of dying out. This means that scientists can continue to study an animal even if it becomes extinct. In the future, it may even be possible to use cloning techniques to recreate creatures from their tissue samples.

The first group of eight animals whose DNA has been stored includes the Socorro dove and the scimitar-horned oryx, both of which are already extinct in the wild.

PICTURES: OSF/PHOTOLIBRARY.COM, MARK CHILVERS, SOUTHWEST NEWS

# THE POWERPUFF GIRLS — WHO'S AFRAID OF THE CLOSET MONSTER?

**The story so far – Buttercup is about to get her comeuppance for constantly crying wolf about a monster in her closet**




*Continues next week!*

THE POWERPUFF GIRLS AND ALL RELATED CHARACTERS AND ELEMENTS ARE TRADEMARKS OF AND © CARTOON NETWORK. (S04)

# WORDWISE

.....SHOPPING ABROAD.....

## Where can I buy ... ?

**French** Où est-ce qu'on peut acheter ... ?
*"oo es koñ puh ashtay"*
**Spanish** ¿Dónde puedo comprar ... ?
*"don-de pwedo komprar"*
**Italian** Dove posso comprare ... ?
*"dovay pos-so kom-praray"*
**Portuguese** Onde posso comprar ... ?
*"onduh possoo komprar"*

## I'm just looking

**French** Je regarde seulement
*"zhuh ruhgard suhlmoñ"*
**Spanish** Sólo estoy mirando
*"solo estoy mee-rando"*
**Italian** Sto solo guardando
*"sto solo gwar-dando"*
**Portuguese** Só estou a ver
*"so shtoh uh vehr"*

## May I try this on?

**French** Est-ce que je peux l'essayer?
*"es kuh zhuh puh leh-say-yay"*
**Spanish** ¿Puedo probarme esto?
*"pwedo probar-me esto"*
**Italian** Posso provarlo?
*"pos-so pro-varlo"*
**Portuguese** Posso provar isto?
*"possoo proovar eeshtoo"*

## How much is it?

**French** C'est combien? *"say koñbyañ"*
**Spanish** ¿Cuánto es? *"kwanto es"*
**Italian** Quant'è? *"kwan-te"*
**Portuguese** Quanto é? *"kwantoo e"*

## I'll take it

**French** Je le prends *"zhuh luh proñ"*
**Spanish** Me lo llevo *"me lo lyevo"*
**Italian** Lo prendo *"lo prendo"*
**Portuguese** Quero comprar
*"kehroo komprar"*

Collins dictionaries and phrasebooks are priced from £3.99

Collins

# f-mail

This week's star f-mailer will receive nearly £200 worth of fantastic books from Dorling Kindersley. The selection comprises two Shrek books, including the Essential Guide; three sports books: The Olympics, Ultimate Football and How to Play Tennis; the Ultimate Spy Kit; Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Life; Encyclopedia of Science; a World Atlas and a book on outer space; plus the fascinating What Makes Me Me?

The other f-mailers will each receive the Shrek books and What Makes Me Me?

**STAR**

**Dear f-mail,**
**I'm half Greek, half English and reading your article last week on the Athens Olympics made me feel proud to be Greek once again. It was incredible for us to win Euro 2004 and now to host the Olympics which my ancestors started centuries ago has made Greece an important nation. I think it's important for readers to understand the rich history of Greece before you watch the Games. It's fascinating and you can then see how important the Olympics were to the Ancient Greeks and thus how vital it is to continue their tradition. I hope Funday readers love the Olympics and look out for me watching in the crowd!**
**Machlas Konstantinou, 13, via e-mail**

**Peter Sherratt, 13, Buxton**

# ALEX CALLING

**Singer/songwriter Alex Band talks about his life in the rock band, The Calling**

*It's been two years since The Calling's debut album. What have you been up to?*
We spent the first year touring the world, then most of the second year was spent writing and recording the new album. We also wrote songs for the film Daredevil, Aaron [Kamin, The Calling's guitarist] produced records for other artists, and I had a number one hit in the US with the famous musician Carlos Santana. So, we certainly kept ourselves busy!

*Of all the places you toured, which impressed you most?*
I love England because there's no language barrier – we can understand what people are saying! I was also really impressed with Japan because of how advanced they are when it comes to technology.

*Was there anywhere you didn't like?*
Thailand and Brazil were both cool and interesting, but also a little scary. They felt dangerous because of how much crime and poverty there is there.

*How did your life change after the worldwide success of the Camino Palmero album?*
I grew up a lot. I went from being a teenager living with my parents to having a career, making money, travelling the world and buying myself a house.

*When did you discover you could sing?*
I started singing and writing songs in my head when I was about two years old. My voice changed when I was 16 – it became a lot deeper, so I guess that was when I discovered my singing voice.

*What do you think of pop stars who don't play instruments or write songs?*
I like the passion and honesty of someone who is singing about their true feelings when they make music, but some of the greatest singers of all time didn't play or write their own stuff – people such as Elvis Presley. I look at someone like Britney Spears as an entertainer. She might not always be singing live when she's on stage, but she puts on a good show.

*What do you do when you're not working?*
I like to go home to Los Angeles, see my friends and family and play with my cats. I have two. One is called Six because he has six toes. The other is called Paris because I bought him for my girlfriend and Paris is her favourite city.

**The Calling's new single, Things Will Go My Way, is out tomorrow. The band's second album, Two, is out now**

- **The Calling's breakthrough hit, Wherever You Will Go, reached number three in the UK charts in 2002**
- **Their debut album Camino Palmero sold more than 2m copies worldwide**
- **The band won Best Newcomer Award at the 2002 MTV Awards**

**Sayra Dhillon, 8, Sutton Coldfield**

Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Dishes
Dishes who?
Dishes a very bad joke!

Patient: Doctor, doctor, I've been bitten by a werewolf!
Doctor: Did you put anything on it?
Patient: No, it liked me without sauce!

**Liam Heraty, 10, no address given**

**Jessica Mulhall, 12, Rathmichael, Ireland**

**Aled Rhys Owen, 7, Llangunnor**

# GOLDEN GREATS

**More than 3.5bn people around the world will watch 10,000 athletes as they go for gold and Olympic glory in Athens. Jason Page looks back at some of the greatest Olympic heroes of all time who helped make the Summer Games the great event it is today**

## Unexpected double

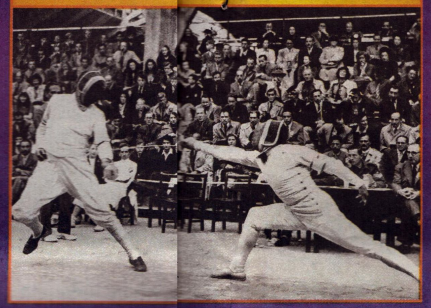
Oxford university student John Boland travelled to Athens to watch the first Olympic Games in 1896 as a spectator. When he arrived, however, a friend persuaded him to enter the tennis event. Incredibly, despite the fact that he was wearing ordinary leather-soled shoes, John won both the men's singles and the men's doubles – returning home as a double Olympic champion!

## Making waves

Danish yachtsman Paul Elvstrøm is the most successful Olympian in any water sport. His Olympic career spanned 40 years beginning when he won a gold medal in the 1948 London Games. He took part in eight Olympics, competing for the last time in 1988 when he sailed in the two-man tornado yacht race. His partner on the boat was his daughter, Trine – the only father and daughter team in the history of the Olympic Games.

## On the fence

Hungarian swordsman Aladar Gerevich is the only Olympian to win a gold medal at six Olympics in a row. He was a member of the winning team in the sabre event [part of the fencing competition] at every Olympics from 1932 to 1960. During his long Olympic career, Aladar [shown on the right, below] won a total of 10 medals. His wife, son and father-in-law were also Olympic medal winners!



## Golden girl

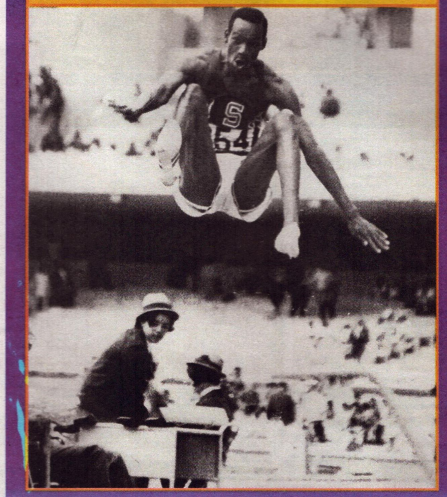
The title of most successful Olympic competitor ever belongs to Ukrainian gymnast Larisa Latynina. She took part in three Games from 1956 to 1964 and won a record 18 Olympic medals, representing the USSR. No other competitor has won as many medals and only three others have equalled Larisa's collection of nine Olympic golds.

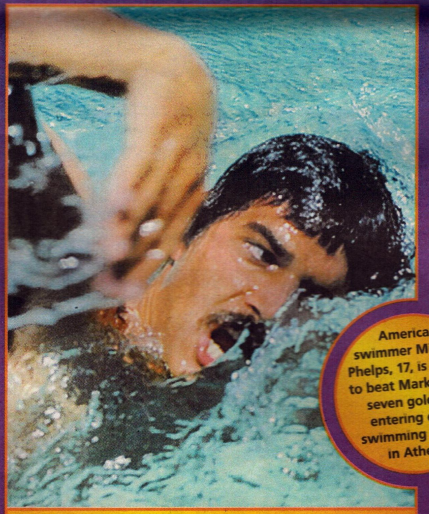
## Top flop

When American high jumper Dick Fosbury cleared the bar for the first time at the 1968 Games, the judges and officials shook their heads in disbelief. Dick had passed over the bar backwards – something no other Olympic high jumper had ever done before. Disbelief, however, turned to wonder when Dick with his revolutionary jumping style won the gold medal. The technique, now known as the "Fosbury Flop", is used by most Olympic high jumpers today.

## Best jumper

American long jumper Bob Beamon leaped into Olympic history during the 1968 Mexico Games. In the final, Beamon – who only just made it though the qualifying round – produced an incredible 8.90m jump which was so long the official measuring device couldn't actually reach it. Bob shattered the world record by an astonishing 55cm and set an Olympic record that still stands today.





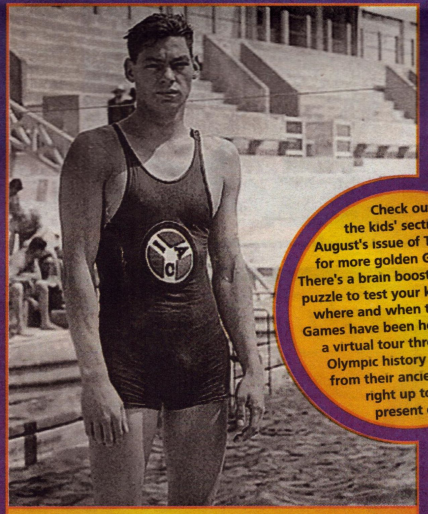
American swimmer Michael Phelps, 17, is aiming to beat Mark Spitz's seven golds by entering eight swimming events in Athens

## Swim king

American swimmer Mark Spitz ensured his place in Olympic history at the Munich Games of 1972. Over the course of just eight days, Spitz won gold medals in seven different events. What is more, he set a new world record in every single event he entered! To this day no other competitor has matched his tally of seven golds at a single Olympics.

## Perfect teenager

In 1976, the Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci became the first person in Olympic history ever to score a "perfect 10" – the highest marks possible in gymnastic events. But Nadia didn't just do it once. The 14-year-old produced no fewer than seven perfect performances at the Montreal Games. No one had ever imagined that such a score was possible. In fact, the scoreboards didn't even go up to the number 10 – so Nadia's score had to be shown as 1.00!



Check out the kids' section in August's issue of The Month for more golden Games fun. There's a brain boosting match-up puzzle to test your knowledge of where and when the Olympic Games have been held. Plus, take a virtual tour through more Olympic history highlights from their ancient origins right up to the present day

## Me, Tarzan

Johnny Weismuller was the greatest swimmer of his day. The American set 28 world records in the pool – one of which remained unbeaten for 17 years. He took part in two Olympics, 1924 and 1928, winning five medals including four golds. When his swimming days were over, Johnny went to the jungle finding greater fame playing Tarzan in 12 Hollywood films.

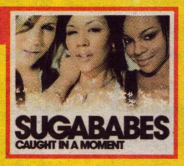
## Head banger

One of the most heroic performances seen at the Olympics occurred in 1988. During the qualifying rounds of the springboard diving competition in Seoul, America's Greg Louganis struck his against the board during a somersault. Despite being badly injured, he refused to pull out of the competition. With his head still wrapped in bandages he continued to dive and went on to win the gold medal.

PICTURES: ©DOC/OLYMPIC MUSEUM COLLECTION, DANNY FINSTER-GEORGE SILK, HUGH CLARK/ON TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES, ALLSPORT USA/ALLSPORT, CENTRICA, TONY DUFFY/ALLSPORT

# FRESH! THIS WEEK

## SINGLE




**CAUGHT IN A MOMENT**
**Sugababes**
The fourth single to be taken from the girls' platinum-selling Three album, Caught in a Moment sees them showing off their sublime harmonising skills once again. A great song to chill out to, with its slow, thoughtful grooves, this is a ballad that really grows – showcasing the Sugababes' maturing sound. Caught in a Moment should be a summer hit.

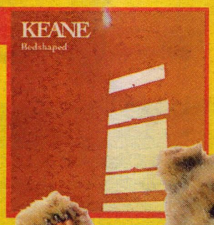
## SINGLE

**SHINING Kristian Leontiou**
Easy listening in a similar vein to label-mate Dido, Shining begins with a sprinkling of breakbeat action before exploding with strings and Kristian's soulful, lover-man tenor. With a downbeat tone and glum lyrics that have drawn comparisons with David Gray, this is an accomplished track, if a little predictable.

## FILM

**YU-GI-OH! THE MOVIE [cert PG]**
Card game and TV phenomenon Yu-Gi-Oh! arrives in cinemas but it will only delight existing fans rather than win new ones. At least the film attempts to expand the storyline with Yugi card-battling for more than just honour against Egyptian spirit, Anubis. Strictly for aficionados, otherwise it's Yu-Gi-No!

## SINGLE



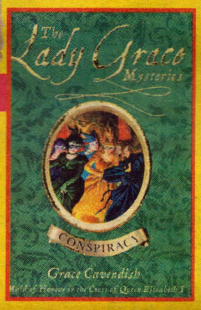

**BEDSHAPED Keane**
Bedshaped isn't everyone's cup of tea as it sees Keane at their most reflective and moody. There's no doubting this is a tad melancholy but it's a welcome antidote to the happy pop out there. After a few listens, it's actually an anthemic song that gets under your skin. We're very Keane!

## TOY

**FUR REAL LUV CUBS**
Everyone has a special affection for teddy bears and the Fur Real Luv Cubs [£34.99 each] take full advantage of this. Each cute bear – polar, panda or brown – demands hugs and cuddles, sneezes when you tickle its nose and is simply adorable. Bear necessities!

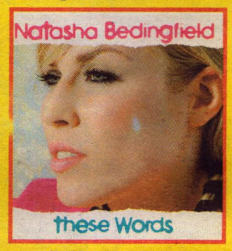
## BOOK

**THE LADY GRACE MYSTERIES: CONSPIRACY**
**Grace Cavendish**
Written via the diary of Maid of Honour Grace Cavendish, there are authentic touches in this mystery set in Queen Elizabeth's court. It's an intriguing rather than absorbing read as the mystery is less of a thrill-a-minute whodunnit but rather a slow-burning tale of shady royal rivalry.



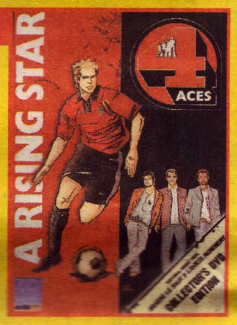
## SINGLE

**THESE WORDS Natasha Bedingfield**
This uninspired effort from Natasha Bedingfield sees her admitting that "nothing she writes is ever good enough." Well, judging by this lacklustre piece of pop fluff, Natasha is just saying it like it is. Natasha's vocals are amazing – but after they've been overproduced like this, they lose their impact.




## BOOK

**THE 4 ACES: A RISING STAR**
The 4 Aces is the rarest of things – a comic book about football. Charting the rise to fame of Zack Cassidy and the success of the Highgate Comets, it's illustrated in an energetic, sketchy style that perfectly captures the football action. The 4 Aces [£5.99] is definitely Premier League.

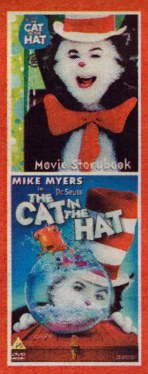



GOOD | OK | BAD

PICTURE ©WARNER BROS PICTURES 2004 WORDS CHRISTOPHER BEETON

# WIN IT!

## TOP CAT



The Cat in the Hat [cert PG] weaves its chaotic charm in your living room as the fanciful fantasy film – starring Mike Myers – is out to own and rent on DVD and VHS tomorrow. Alongside Mike, as the Cat, are Dakota Fanning as Sally and Spencer Breslin as Conrad, as well as Thing 1 and Thing 2. The DVD [£17.99] has extras which include a making of feature, a dance-along and out-takes so grab a couch, grab a seat, you're in for a wonderful treat! Universal Pictures Video has a Thomson widescreen TV and DVD player, a Palm-One PDA [like Sally uses], The Cat in the Hat DVD and a set of six Cat in the Hat books from HarperCollins to give away to one lucky Funday reader. Plus, 10 runners-up win the DVD and the book set.

**To enter, tell us which author wrote The Cat in the Hat book.**

Mark your entry CAT IN THE HAT and send it, with your name, age, address and home phone number, to the competition address on page 2.

# SHINE ON

**Kristian Leontiou talks about growing up with dyslexia and his Greek Cypriot roots**

*Hi Kristian, did being dyslexic make school extra tough?*
I don't think so. I don't think that's an excuse at all. If you want to do well, you'll do well. It might be a bit harder and it might take longer, but if you put your mind to it then I really think you can do it.

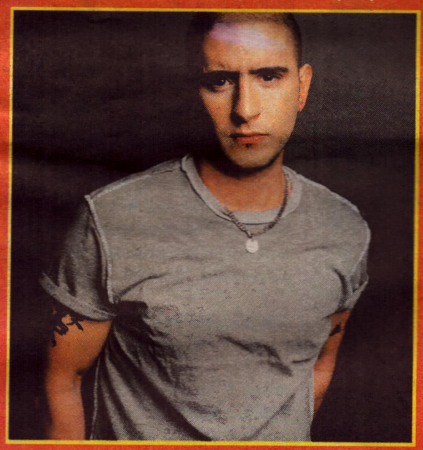
*How does dyslexia affect you?*
I have difficulty reading because words get a bit muddled and messed around in my head. For example, when I read things out loud, I might miss out words or get them in the wrong order. It's the same with numbers. If I read a phone number out and it includes the numbers 726, I might read them as 627.

*Does that make songwriting tricky?*
No, because I take my time writing. Like I said earlier, you can do anything if you put your mind to it. I write in my own special way. Even if it doesn't make sense to anyone else, it's me who's going to read and sing it, so it's fine.

*Where's your family from?*
I grew up in Wembley, in north west London, and my mum's from London as well. But my dad is originally from Cyprus.

*Have your Greek Cypriot roots had an effect on your life?*
Not really, other than going on holiday there once every few years. My parents were quite laid-back so I haven't grown up in a strict Greek household.

*What's Cyprus like?*
It's a lot of hills and dusty roads! There are nice beaches and the people are very friendly.



*What's the story behind your new single, Shining?*
It's about when people haven't seen the best of what you can do. It applies to everyone, whether you're at school or older. If you get grief at school or people think you're stupid, it's a message to say: "You know what? I can do better than you think."

**Kristian's latest single, Shining, is released tomorrow**

# SMELL OF SUCCESS?

**Funday catches up with DJ Mandy Darcy from cool new dance act Scent**

*How did you start off in dance music?*
I started DJing about four-and-a-half years ago. Then, last year, I heard about a DJ competition in Cork, near where I live in Ireland, so I entered. I did some live vocals on the night and a guy called Daniele Davoli – who was one of the judges – called me up to ask if I was interested in doing vocals on a track he was working on. We got on really well and came up with a lot of ideas, so we decided to form Scent. Now I write most of the lyrics and some melodies for the band, which is brilliant.

*What were you doing before the band took off?*
After finishing school, I trained as a nurse for about a year-and-a-half but I found it wasn't for me, so I started taking care of the elderly. I was saving up the money to buy decks and equipment, and as soon as I got them I gave it all up and started DJing. I knew from a young age that I wanted to be a DJ.

*Can you tell us about Scent's first single?*
It's called Up & Down. I wrote the lyrics for it and it's about a girl who lives her life to the extreme. She's never content and it's about the ups and down of wanting too much and never being satisfied. It does have a nice ending.

*How is the Scent album coming along?*
We have about two more tracks to do but it's pretty much done. I'm so pleased with it and feel really proud. It's like poppy rock, and it also has a bit of an electro sound.

*Which artists are you a fan of?*
I think Beyoncé is the best performer I've ever seen in my life, and Alicia Keys is also amazing. She's such a talented lyricist. I'm really into soulful music. I love dance music, but you need a break from it every now and again.

**Scent's debut single, Up & Down, is out now**

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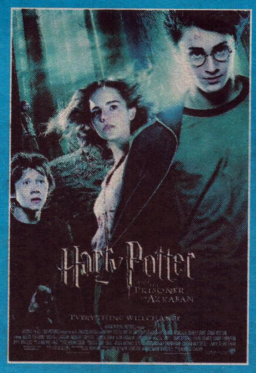
# HOGWART'S EXCESS




Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban [cert PG] may be one of the biggest films of the summer, but Funday is about to make it even bigger. At IMAX-cinemas you can watch the latest adventures of your favourite wizard on a screen taller than four double decker buses, and we've got 100 pairs of tickets to give away.

Even if you've already seen Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban at a normal cinema, you'll be amazed at the difference an IMAX makes. From the comfort of your seat, the giant screen puts you right in the heart of the action, as Harry, Hermione and Ron battle the evil dementors.

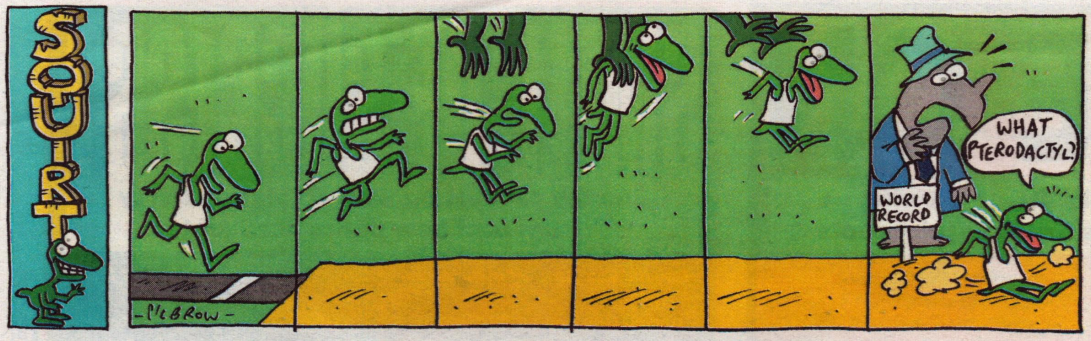
For your chance to win a pair of Harry Potter IMAX tickets, just answer this question:

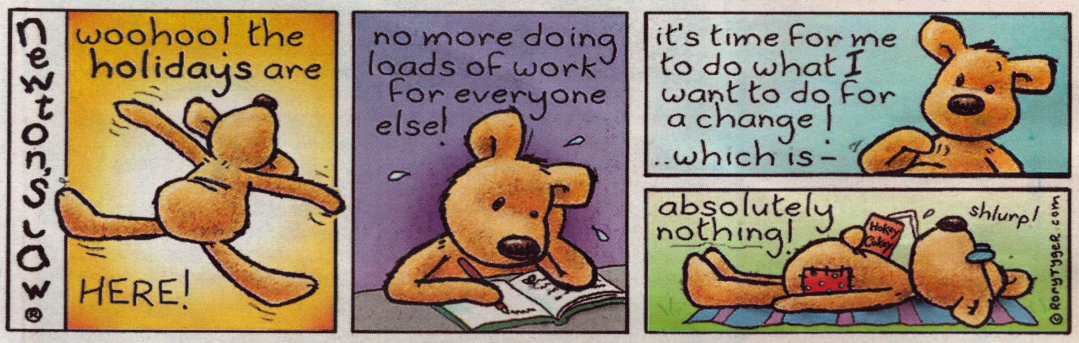
**From which platform does the Hogwarts Express leave?**

Mark your entry HARRY POTTER and send it, with your name, age, address and home phone number, to the competition address on page two. Please also state which IMAX cinema you would like to win tickets for. You can choose from London Science Museum or Manchester [valid to August 27] Bristol or Bradford [valid to September 5].

IMAX®

Normal TNL competition rules apply to all Funday Times competitions



# QF QUICK FIRE

## JONATHAN WILKES

*How tidy was your room when you left this morning?*
**Quite tidy. I am a tidy person, I don't like mess, although I have a habit of putting things in piles.**

*What CD are you listening to?*
**The musical Tommy by The Who, from the 1970s.**

*Which TV shows do you catch?*
**Anything to do with sport really, and I do watch EastEnders if I can.**

*Who's the most intriguing celebrity you have ever met?*
**Bono. If somebody should be running our country, it should be him. He's the most charming man and one of the most talented performers I've seen.**

*What's your secret geeky thing?*
**I wear briefs instead of boxers.**

*What have you been putting off doing recently?*
**Sorting out my bathroom, I've been putting it off for a year.**

*Which profession, other than yours, would you like to try?*
**People laugh, but I have always wanted to be a TV repair man. I fixed my nan's TV once, which was great.**

*When are you happiest?*
**When I'm at home with my wife ... or when I'm at a footie match!**

*What's your motto for life?*
**You'll get what you want to achieve if you work hard.**

**Jonathan Wilkes stars in Grease at Bournemouth Pavilion, August 17-28 [box office 0870 111 3000]**



**Are you like Newton during your holidays?**

# DESTINATION: FRANCE

Bonjour! Welcome to Funday Air's flight to France. We hope you have a pleasant stay

## ON YOUR BIKE

France hosts one of the world's most popular sporting events – the Tour de France. This annual cycling race lasts for three weeks with 200 of the world's elite cyclists competing over a 4,000km course. The Tour is divided into 20 stages, including exhausting mountain climbs through the Pyrenees and Alps. The cyclist in the overall lead at the beginning of each stage has the honour of wearing the coveted "maillot jaune" – the yellow jersey. Last month, American Lance Armstrong [centre] won the Tour de France for a record sixth time in a row.

## WHERE ARE WE?

France is the third largest country in Europe – only Russia and Ukraine are bigger. It is made up of the French mainland and the island of Corsica in the Mediterranean Sea. France and the UK are separated by a narrow stretch of water, known as the English Channel in Britain and La Manche in France. At the narrowest point in the Channel, the two countries are just 34km apart.

## THE BASICS

**Full name:** Republique Francaise [French Republic]
**Capital:** Paris
**Other major cities:** Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Nice
**Currency:** Euro [formerly Franc]
**Population:** 60m [the same as the UK]
**Size:** 551,500 sq km [more than twice the size of the UK]
**President:** Jacques Chirac
**Major exports:** chemicals, machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, automobiles, aircraft, weapons, wine, grains, iron and steel

## FINE WINE

France produces some of the world's finest wine – or *vin*. Various regions grow different types of grape to produce very distinct wines – from light sparkling white wines made in Champagne to the dark rich red wines Bordeaux is famous for. At harvest time, the grapes are picked, then crushed, and the juice fermented in large barrels. It is then transferred to bottles and aged in cool underground cellars for several years [or in some cases decades] until it is ready to drink.

## SAY FROMAGE

More than 400 different types of cheese or *fromage* are produced in France. Famous varieties include Brie, Camembert and Roquefort

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

France, or Gaul as it was known, was once part of the Roman Empire. Towards the end of the 5th century, the region was invaded by tribes from Germany. One of these tribes was called the Franks and France is named after them.

## IT'S A DATE

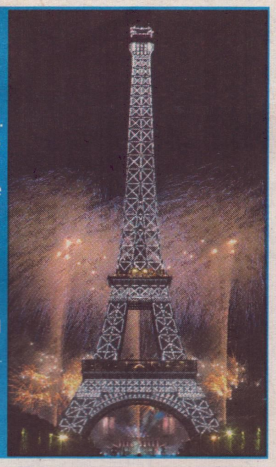
**987** France is united under one king
**1789** The French Revolution sees the French people overthrow King Louis XVI
**1944** Paris is liberated from Nazi occupation during the second world war
**1994** The Channel Tunnel opens

## FIT FOR A KING

Many beautiful castles [known as *chateaux*] can be found throughout France, particularly in the tranquil forests of the Loire Valley. Among the most famous and spectacular is the chateau at Fontainebleau. This was once a medieval fortress but from the 1500s onwards it became a favourite summer residence of France's kings who transformed it into one of the most elegant buildings in Europe.

## PARISIAN SIGHTS

The Eiffel Tower is France's most famous landmark. It was built by an engineer, Gustave Eiffel, as part of a huge fair called the Universal Exhibition, held in Paris in 1889. The tower [which is 300m high and was once the tallest building in the world] was supposed to be taken down at the end of the fair but it proved so popular the city's authorities decided to keep it. Another famous French landmark is the Palace of Versailles. It was built by King Louis XIV during the 17th century. It has more than 1,300 rooms and includes a dazzling mirrored hallway. It was precisely this type of excessive luxury that made France's royalty so unpopular with the people and ultimately led to their downfall in the French Revolution of 1789.

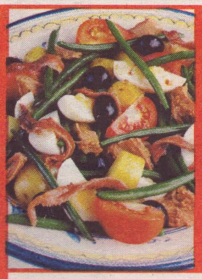


## ON THE MENU

French cuisine is famous the world over but you don't have to be a top chef to produce an authentic French dish. Try this recipe for salad Niçoise – a delicious summer salad from Nice in the south of France.

**Ingredients:** • tin of anchovies, chopped • tin of tuna • two hard boiled eggs chopped into quarters • 50g of pitted black olives • six tomatoes chopped into quarters • crisp lettuce • 125g of French beans cooked in boiling water for five minutes

**For the dressing:** • pinch of salt • teaspoon of honey • tablespoon of wine vinegar • three tablespoons of olive oil • 1/2 teaspoon of French mustard



Simply mix all the ingredients for the salad together in a large bowl. Mix up the dressing in a small jug, give it a good stir and pour it over the salad.

Thank you for flying with us. Our final destination is Portugal

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The Simpsons will be back in Funday soon!